



# Food That's In . . . When School Is Out!

## Summer Food Service Program for Children

### Recruiting Sponsors and Sites

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) feeds only one in six children eligible for free and reduced price school meals during summer vacation. Current sponsors need to expand and new sponsors need to be recruited to increase the number of sites where lower income children can obtain meals throughout the Nation.

#### **An Essential Part of SFSP**

Outreach cannot be a special activity done for a year or two and then forgotten. It is not just a required annual State activity. Without effective outreach, local circumstances and personnel changes may result in a potential decline in sponsors and sites just as SFSP needs to grow to meet the needs of hungry children.

States must be creative and persistent. Outreach techniques should be reviewed regularly to determine their effectiveness. States must remember that good techniques and great effort may not show immediate impact. Some organizations may respond immediately, but others may take years to decide to become sponsors.

#### **Types of Organizations that Frequently Become Sponsors or Sites**

School Districts and Individual Schools	County and City Governments	Religious Organizations
Indian Tribal Organizations	Neighborhood Organizations	Park and Recreation Departments
Civil Rights Organizations	YMCAs/YWCAs	4-H
Salvation Army	Police and Fire Departments	Community Action Agencies
Food Banks and Food Pantries	Cooperative Extension	Homeless and Women's Shelters
Colleges and Universities including National Youth Sports and Upward Bound Programs		Housing Authorities and Resident Councils

States have learned that techniques that include more personal and individualized contact with potential sponsors work best. Three of the most common techniques used are:



#### **Mailings**

Mailings to organizations that could host sites or become sponsors are a basic outreach activity, although mass mailings of form letters are not likely by themselves to produce the desired results.

**Contents of a typical mailing to potential sponsors are:** 1) a cover letter describing the opportunity for community organizations to address

the need for nutritional needs of children during the summer through the SFSP, including a fax number where a response can be sent (a stamped return address envelope may be included as well); 2) a fact sheet or brochure that describes the purpose of the Program; and 3) an outreach questionnaire to indicate interest in getting more information.



Sending a general description of SFSP to a potential sponsor will not be as effective as: 1) identifying specific schools in the district that are eligible as sites; and 2) appealing to potential sponsors on the basis of their primary mission.



### **Special Mailings**

Organizations that did not become a sponsor or site during the past year, may do so this year. Provide them with updated information regarding the need of children in their area for access to SFSP.

**State or local legislators** may find organizations to become sponsors or host sites. Ask them to help their constituents. Use geo-mapping software, in conjunction with the census block group data provided by FNS to show the need for SFSP in a legislator's district.

**Submit articles for publication** in newsletters of State-wide organizations with potential sponsor readers. Contact associations in early winter to submit a SFSP article with pictures, charts or other graphics. The article should appeal to the mission of the association and its members.



### **Add the Personal Touch**

Mailings provide good basic information, but personal contact is a far more effective outreach technique. That contact can be made by the State agency, another sponsor or an advocacy group. Having another sponsor from the same area talk to the potential sponsor can add credibility to your outreach. Having a similar type of sponsor, such as a school contacting a potential school sponsor is even better.

Advocacy groups frequently have expertise in outreach. In some cases States have even contracted with advocacy groups to do outreach.

Personal contact obviously takes more time. Target outreach to areas of high need with low service. Using school and census data to locate unserved areas can help.

Presentations at meetings of organizations with potential local sponsors is another way to maximize your effectiveness by providing a personal touch to a larger group. Many States also use mandatory sponsor training sessions to answer potential sponsors' questions.

### **Common Statewide Associations**

Commission on Indian Affairs  
Major Child Advocacy Organizations  
Township Association  
Municipal League

State Recreation and Park Association  
State Parent Teachers Association  
State Association of Counties  
State School Food Service Association

### **Sites vs Sponsors**

Our goal is to maximize the number of lower income children participating in high quality SFSP programs. The number of sponsors is not as important as the number of sites available to children. We do not want sites too small to be financially sound, but we must have sites near enough for children to attend.

We should recruit more sponsors to increase the number of sites, but we should keep in mind that there is usually a one to two year learning curve for new sponsors. It is also easier for one sponsor to administer ten sites than for two sponsors to administer five sites each.

Potential sponsors should be encouraged to approach an existing sponsor about the possibility of operating a new site for that sponsor. Working to develop such a partnership may result in a stronger sponsor and site operation as well as less State administrative work. It could also result in more children participating in a high quality SFSP.

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